

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Gifted education can be undermined by nature of testing

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Jul 2, 2020

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Rosalie Metro (guest commentary published June 23) appropriately reminds us about the relationship between social justice and gifted identification and the need to ensure that gifted programs more accurately match the composition of the local and national populations. Researchers have estimated that there are approximately 800,000 students of color who should have been identified and were not (Naglieri & Otero, 2017).

There are many obstacles to be overcome, but one of the most important issues is the ability tests selected and how the tests are used. The following statement really caught my eye: "Qualifying for EEE involves receiving certain scores on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, 3rd Edition in kindergarten or second grade, [and] the Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children, 5th Edition." There is a fundamental problem here that undermines efforts to make gifted identification more socially just.

As the author of the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Tests, my goal was to determine how well a student can understand relationships between shapes, see how various pieces fit the whole and notice important distinctions between shapes, all of which has been described as general ability. My test questions measure how well students can think, and their scores are not to be influenced by how much they know. This is a very efficient way to measure "general ability," which the WISC-V also measures. Tests of that kind include, for example, a vocabulary test, which is a reasonable way to measure general ability if a student has had the opportunity to learn the content of the questions.

Equitable assessment is undermined, however, when a student who attains a high score on a nonverbal test is denied access to gifted education because of a lower score on a second test that demands verbal and quantitative skills. We can do better when we fully understand the nature of the tests we choose and avoid

measuring ability using test questions that demand knowledge especially for those with unfamiliarity with English and limited opportunity to learn.

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